THE UK - ALBANIA RELATIONS
A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW
100 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (1922-2022)
By Mal Berisha
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2022 marks a historic event in the relations between the Republic of Albania and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: the 100th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. These formal diplomatic relations were first established in 1922 when the new Albanian state, only ten years old, was showing signs of stability and capacity to self-govern. This year was important for the Albanian state, for it marked diplomatic recognition of two major world powers, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Since then, the two countries have established strong diplomatic relations and have worked side by side in international organisations like NATO etc. Furthermore, the recent decades have presented new opportunities for cultural exchange between two countries, strengthening even further the cultural ties, which - as we discuss in this study - go way back to the 16th century. Renowned British personalities like Lord Byron, Aubrey Herbert, Edit Durham and Benjamin Disraeli are widely recognised in Albania for their praise of the Albanian culture. On the other hand, more than 150,000 Albanians are believed to be living currently in the UK and contributing to the British society. Artists, authors and politicians of Albanian descent, like Dua Lipa, Rita Ora, Ermonela Jaho, Lea Ypi, and Kastriot Berberi are household names in the UK.

Moreover, the British government has played a crucial role throughout the history of Albania, from the Albanian Declaration of Independence to nowadays. The support of Great Britain to Albania is discussed in greater detail in this paper, focusing on historical events such as the Berlin Congress of 1878; the Conference of Ambassadors in London, in 1913; Albania's accession to the League of Nations, in 1920; assistance to the establishment of public institutions in the newly independent state of Albania; and the support given during the Second World War, through the Special Operations Executives (SOE) and the 53 UK martyrs who lost their lives in Albanian soil.

The relationship between two countries was challenged after the Second World War, when a communist dictatorship was installed in Albania, from 1944 to 1990. The anti-Anglo-American political course of the Albanian communist dictator was reinforced by the issue of 'Albanian Gold' and the Corfu Incidents, which are discussed in this paper. However, after the regime change, the two countries began talks and re-established diplomatic relations in 1991. Incidentally, the last former Albanian diplomat in London, Dervish Duma, and his son, Alexander, became the first mediators of the restoration of these relations, connecting two eras: The severance of relations after 1939 and the restoration of them in 1991.

In the last three decades, the support provided by the British government to Albania, has been multifaceted: from providing humanitarian aid, through offering expertise and scholarships, to the military aid, especially with assistance to ensuring Albania's membership in NATO. Nowadays, the political, economic and cultural ties between two countries are intensified. In particular, economic investments in Albania from the British private sector are very strategical.

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They are focused on telecommunications, oil, gas and electricity. Although, there is still room for improvement, and much more is left to be done in the near future.

The two countries have signed a total of 25 bilateral agreements, which cover a wide variety of areas, including defence, education, science and culture, economy, the fight against organised crime, transportation, investment protection, air service, exchange of information on immigration, prevention of tax evasion, joint military exercises, and care for returnees.

Some recommendations on moving forward in strengthening the bilateral relations.

- Policymakers can do more to facilitate financial exchange between both countries. The strategic geographical position of Albania might present new opportunities for British industry to transfer production capacities and diversify its supply chain, reducing transportation time, increasing resilience and lower their production costs.
- From the perspective of trade, the two countries have many opportunities to expand their cooperation and strategically harmonise diversifications into many sectors and industries from which both peoples can benefit.
- More should be done to encourage British Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). Taking into consideration that Albania has one of the youngest populations in Europe, composed of highly skilled workforce and well trained young people who speak English and look up to the Western Way of life.
- Albanian government should coordinate the work of other actors (both public and private) to make Albania more welcoming to British tourists. While it still lacks the capacity to build a large-scale infrastructure, required for massive tourism, Albania's coastline and mountains can offer a lot to British travellers throughout the year. Similarly, its culinary traditions offer cultural richness to tourists.
- Both governments should work with the private sector to encourage airlines to increase the frequency of flights, and to introduce low-cost flights between two countries. In that vein, a lot of work has to be done to facilitate the visa application process.

In this paper, we will dwell on some very essential elements, illustrating how the two countries and peoples have seen each other and collaborated in quite a long course of history.

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2022 marks a historic event in the relations between the Republic of Albania and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: the 100th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. This anniversary takes us back in time to understand how we got to that point and what occurred next, up to the present day.

In 1922, when Albania and the United Kingdom established formal diplomatic relations for the first time in history, the new Albanian state, only ten years old, was showing signs of stability and capacity to self-govern. These developments were inspired by a model that Albanian politicians of the time had seen in Western countries and were trying to emulate in their own.

This year was important for the Albanian state, for it marked diplomatic recognition of two major world powers, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. As we discuss in greater detail below, while the formal recognition by the UK came after some major events, it was prominent British intellectuals who had paved the way to the consideration of Albanians and Albania as a nation. Indeed, the number of British intellectuals and prominent figures who had crossed Albanian lands and praised its people in their written work throughout history, might be unmatched by any other nationality. These chroniclers, travellers, writers, poets, painters, and prominent politicians, including Lord Byron, Edward Lear and Benjanim Disraeli, documented their impressions on Albania and Albanians in writings, notes, travel diaries, books, novels, and paintings. They saw Albania as a unique, exotic country, with its national identity and all the elements that make a nation, even though it was forcibly placed under Ottoman rule.

When the issue of the Albanian nation was becoming a matter of European diplomacy, the UK established a more direct diplomatic effort with Albania as a result of the struggle for establishing a nation and the decreasing influence of the Ottoman empire. These relationships intensified when Albanians tried to eliminate the Ottoman yoke, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The proclamation of the Independence of Albania and the recognition of the new Albanian state marked a historic moment, among others, although the demarcation of its borders got decided by the six Great Powers of that time (Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia) at the London Peace Conference of 1912-1913. Ten years after this event, the two countries established diplomatic relations.

Events of special historical significance for the Albania-UK relations include:

- The Berlin Congress, held on March 3, 1878
- The Conference of the Ambassadors in London (London Peace Conference), held between December 1912 and January 1913
- The Secret Treaty of London, in 1915



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- Albania's accession to the League of Nations, in Geneva 1920, as a result of the Great Britain's influence
- Assistance provided to the Kingdom of Albania, especially in the organisation of the gendarmerie, as well as providing humanitarian aid
- Funding the establishment of the first Public Library in Tirana and erecting several sanitary centres in Vlora
- The support provided by the Special Operations Executives (SOE) and the 53 martyrs who lost their lives in Albanian soil.

Albania was recognised as an independent state and placed under the care of Europe thanks to Albanian patriots, but also thanks to the efforts of its friends and allies, including the British. Therefore, in this paper we will discuss the contribution of powerful voices of British politics in defence of Albania's independence and territorial integrity.

Since the First World War the United Kingdom has been present in Albania in many forms. First and foremost, is the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1922, starting with the arrival in Durrës of the diplomat Sir Harry Charles Augustus Eyres, and the admission in the Court of St. James of the representative of Albania, Mehmet Konica. It is worth mentioning here the historical contribution of Colonel Aubrey Herbert in strengthening diplomatic relations between the two countries. Indeed, the United Kingdom never agreed with the Italian invasion of Albania in 1939, and it continued to recognise Albanian diplomatic representatives, even after the country was ruled by the Italian government under Mussolini.

For 44 years in a row, the UK played an antagonist role to the communist government of Albania, which was influenced by the dispute on the "Corfu Incident" and the issue of the "Albanian Gold" that was looted by the Nazi Germans during the war and was later put in custody of the UK. However, right after the fall of communist government, the two countries began talks that led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. In the last thirty years, the support provided by the British government has been multifaceted: from providing humanitarian aid, through offering expertise and scholarships, to the military aid, especially with assistance to ensuring Albania's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Nowadays, the political, economic, and cultural ties between two countries are intensified, and more than 150,000 Albanians are believed to be living in the UK. Therefore, in this paper, we will shed more light on this relationship, highlighting the importance of key historical events, and the contributed given by prominent actors from both countries.

## 2. MAIN EVENTS IN UK - ALBANIAN RELATION

This section discusses the key historical events that have shaped the relationship between the Republic of Albania and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

### 2.1 The Congress of Berlin, in 1878

One of the most important historical events for Albania is the Congress of Berlin of 1878, where a major player was the then Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli. Many historians explained Disraeli's stance in defence of the Ottoman Empire, with (a) his interest to stop the expansion of Slavic countries (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Kingdom of Montenegro) towards the Balkans, and (b) his imperial tendencies, given that he is the author of the proclamation of Queen Victoria - Empress, and of the United Kingdom, "Empire where the Sun never sets," on May 1, 1876.

Benjamin Disraeli had good knowledge of Albanians, also because he had passed through Ioannina in the early 19th century (1830 - 1831). Thus, from the beginning of the Congress, the Albanian community sent a memorandum to him and to Lord Beaconsfield. Despite this appeal, the interests of the Albanians were utterly ignored, and the Albanian territories were left again under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Albanian leaders reacted by founding the Albanian League of Prizren.[1]

The document cited below, which signed by representatives of Albania, including Vaso Pashë Shkodrani, in Shkodra, on June 13, 1878, best illustrates the high hopes that Albanians had placed in Benjamin Disraeli[2]. They asked him, to enable Albanians to establish an Albanian state, and therefore to be a barrier to Slavic expansion (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Kingdom of Montenegro):

> Albania is a single nation, with language, traditions, history, and all other constituent elements of national identity. It must therefore be under a single government, and this state and those that will emerge from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire must be secured by the Great Powers. Albania will also owe a lifetime to Great Britain for the consolidation and recognition of independence, and this gift will not be a loss until the reconstruction of this new state produces a corps of disciplined soldiers, who will serve as a guard post for the armies of Western Europe.

[1] Robert Elsie, Historical Dictionary of Albania, The Scarecrow Pres. Inc. Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2010.
[2] Robert Elsie, website of studies about the History of Albania, www.elsie.de

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## 2.2 The Conference of the Ambassadors (London Peace Conference), 1912-1913

In 1912, the Albanians declared independence. However, the Conference of the Ambassadors in London would define their state's borders. The decision on the issue was reached after fifty-four meetings of the conference on June 29, 1913. It briefly formulated the following points for the international recognition of the independence of Albania:

> Albania is constituted as an autonomous, sovereign, and hereditary principality by the right of primogeniture, guaranteed by the six Powers. The six Powers will designate the sovereign. Any form of suzerainty between Turkey and Albania is excluded. The control of the civil administration and finances of Albania is to be given over to an International Commission composed of the delegates of the six Powers and one delegate from Albania, to be nominated within six months. Until his designation and until the formation of a definitive national government, the International Commission will control the activities of the existing local authorities and the gendarmerie. These officers will be selected from the Swedish army.

## 2.3 The Secret Treaty of London, in 1915

The events that led to the Great War, which began with the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, upset the whole of Europe and beyond. The desire of the great powers to draw Italy to their side of the war seems to have 'polled' what is known as the Secret Treaty of London, signed on April 26, 1915, between Italy and the allied forces, France, Britain, and Russia.

This treaty, which was kept secret, as stipulated in its Article 16, had many harmful clauses against Albania, all in favour of Italy. However, it was not implemented, because it was not ratified by the respective countries' parliaments, which shows how unfounded it was.

It must be said that it was American President Woodrow Wilson who, in opposition to the Secret Treaty of London, proclaimed the Principles of Self-Determination of Nations, which he unveiled at the Paris Peace Conference when he declared:

> Merely because America is not a signatory to the Secret Treaties, does not mean that it was not aware of them."[3]

Many historians agree that it was the President Wilson's support in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 what most likely prevented the disintegration of Albania.

[3] Archive of Yale University Divinity School Library. New England, Erickson collection group 26, series nr 1, box nr 2, folder nr. 10.

## 2.4 Albania's Membership in the League of Nations

Shortly after the Paris Peace Conference in 1920, the League of Nations convened in Geneva. Albania's membership in the League of Nations needed the dedicated support of the British parliamentarian, Colonel Aubrey Herbert, who influenced the British delegation composed or alternated by Lord Robert Cecil and Lord Arthur Balfour.

On several occasions, between 1917 and 1918, the British Parliament has debated the case of Albania, and the potential harmful ramifications of the Secret Treaty of London, as well as the misuse of the Corfu Protocols by Albania's neighbours. Thus, on February 18, 1918, Lord Lambert[4] succinctly state that "Albania's independence and integrity were protected by the doctrine of the self-determination of peoples." Similarly, on November 20, 1918, in the House of Commons, Lord Sydenham[5], on behalf of Lord Lamington, asked His Majesty's government:

> If Albanian representatives were present at the Peace Conference, what steps would be taken to ensure Albania's right to self-determination as solemnly recognised by the United Kingdom, on behalf of the smallest nations in Europe?

These debates, which are reflected in the Foreign Office's report of June 1920,[6] greatly informed the position of Great Britain towards Albania. To illustrate, in his speech in Parliament, on December 5, 1917, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour[7], declared that "His Majesty's Government has the greatest sympathy for the Albanian people."

In December 1920, Albania submitted its application for membership to the League of Nations, and a couple of months later, on July 4, 1921, the Albanian Prime Minister, Iliaz Vrioni, submitted to the League Assembly an appeal asking for the recognition of the Albanian territory as recognised by the Conference of the Ambassadors in 1913.

The report of the subcommittee for application of Albania was delivered by Lord Robert Cecil, who in his arguments stated:

> *Albania by virtue is a nation with the unanimous desire of its inhabitants and that recognition, first brings the new state to the family of nations and then, it continues to exist so as not to disappear from any occupation or any general agreement of those who covet it.*[8]

In the same vein, Lord Arthur Balfour, the Earl of Balfour and one of the architects of the League of Nations, prepared a report that was favourable to the Albania's interests. Finally, the League

[4] British Parliament, Parliamentary Debates, volume 103, page 404.
[5] British Parliament, Parliamentary Debates, volume 32, page 319.
[6] Public record Office, Foreign Office, 371/5726 – 05585/580/1921.
[7] British Parliament, Parliamentary Debates, volume 100, page 400.
[8] Minutes of the meeting of Committee of the First Assembly of the League of Nations, nr 13, dated 11 December 1920, page 12-13.



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of Nations approved this report on September 2, 1921, marking an important development for the independence of Albania.

## 2.5 The Aubrey Herbert phenomenon and his aid to the new Albanian state

As it is discussed above, the mosaic of British events and personalities that helped the Albanian cause, on top of everyone, stands Colonel Aubrey Herbert (1880-1923), who came from an aristocrat family, born in the Hicklere Castle. He helped to make the Albanian cause known during the post-independence period. In 1912 and 1913, he travelled through the Balkans. At the time of the Conference of Ambassadors, he established the Albanian Committee to assist the Albanian delegation in its talks with the Great Powers. This Albanian committee turned into what is known as the Anglo-Albanian Association in 1918, and Herbert became its President and finally took the name that still has today "Anglo Albanian Association."[9] In 1913, he met Edith Durham and collaborated to organise humanitarian aid.

He became friend with Isa Boletini, who was a prominent political figure of Albania, and signatory of the Albanian Declaration of Independence. Colonel Aubrey Herbert visited Albania seven times, and in 1913 he acted as a liaison between the FCO and the founding fathers of the modern Albania, including Isa Boletini and Ismail Qemali, who became the first Prime Minister of Albania, after declaring the country independent from the Ottoman empire.

He was offered the Royal Crown of Albania at one point in his life. The offer for this honour is beautifully described by Charles Telford Erickson in a particular article in his book "Albania - The Enigma of the Balkans."[10] Aubrey Herbert agreed to receive the Crown of the Albanian King, but his sudden death did not allow this to happen. Herbert's extraordinary contribution is reflected in the book by Bejtullah Destani and Jason Tomes, "Aubrey Herbert, Albania's Greatest Friend", which describes that in his deathbed, he pleaded with his mother, Elizabeth, to "take care of Albania!", and that she vowed to fulfil his will.

## 2.6 The Congress of Lushnja and the contribution of Morton Eden

The Congress of Lushnja of 1920 is one of the most influential events that laid the foundations of the independent Albania. This congress, which brought together Albanian political leaders, posed a great danger to the organisers, given that the country was still under the military control of the Italian army. Notwithstanding these circumstances, Albanian

[9] The Anglo-Albanian Association (AAA) was founded in 1912 by Aubrey Herbert. Edith Durham was an early Active Participant and Secretary of the Association.

[10] Archive of Yale University Divinity School Library, New England, Erickson collection group 26, series nr 1, box nr 2, folder nr. 22.

patriots benefited from the support of English General F. Philips and the British Consul, Major Morton Frederick Eden.

Morton Eden knew the situation in Albania very well, having served in Shkodra as a member of the Command of the International Allied Corps throughout the First World War. In his memoirs, Eqrem Bej Vlora, argues that Morton Eden inspired Albanian leaders to expel Italians troops and hold their congress in Lushnje. Indeed, his activity in the Congress of Lushnja and the Vlora War (June 4 to September 3, 1920) against Italians, is well documented.

Furthermore, Morton Eden dealt with Albanology as an English agent who helped the Albanians consolidate their fragile state in very turbulent times for themselves and Europe. To that end, in respect to the values and virtues of the Albanian nation, he has written the book "Albania, its Dissatisfaction and their origin."[11] This book was censored by the communist government (1944 - 1990) and remained in manuscript until 2019 when it was published by Petro Luarasi.

In 1920, Morton Eden was elected a member of the Executive Council of the Anglo-Albanian Society, headed by Colonel Aubrey Herbert, and continued to work in favour of Albania until his death in 1948.

## 2.7 Organization of the Albanian gendarmerie by the British

At the same time, the government of His Majesty George V and VI helped organise the Albanian gendarmerie. In 1923, Ahmet Zogu, then Minister of Interior of Albania, took as his advisor the British W.F. Sterling for the organisation of the Albanian gendarmerie. Sterling divided Albania into four zones and made an outstanding selection of individuals who would be part of the Albanian gendarmerie, appointing two British officers in each zone.

In 1926, Sterling proposed to President Ahmet Zogu that he take as advisor General Jocelyn Percy, who had extraordinary organisational skills. Ahmet Zogu entrusted him the order, control over the territory, instruction, and formation of the gendarmerie to the British and to General Jocelyn Percy.

Each zonal division of Albania had two British inspectors. Within a year, the country fell into silence. About his experience in Albania, Sterling has written a book entitled "Safety Last."[12] Stirling returned to Britain in 1931, while General Percy was appointed Inspector General and Head of the Gendarmerie Department at the Royal Court.

[11] "Albania Its Discontents and their origin", Morton Eden, London 1920.

[12] "Safety Last" by Sterling Publisher: Hollis & Carter, 1953.

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Percy brought from England Colonels Oakley-Hill, Dodgson, Bredin, Cripps, & c. Oakley-Hill remained in Zog's service until 1938; Dayrell Oakley-Hill began work in 1929 and served in Elbasan, where he learned Albanian and travelled extensively throughout Albania.

He was forced to leave Albania, with the withdrawal of all British officers in November 1938. Subsequently, he engaged with special units known as Special Operations Executive (SOE), in Belgrade and Kosovo, while after the war directed what is known as UNRRA.[13]

He served as president of the Anglo-Albanian Association in London in later years. He died in London in 1985. His memoirs about Albania are published in a book titled: "An Englishman in Albania: Memoirs of a British officer."[14]

## 2.8 Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Albania[15]

During World War II, with the fall of France into the hands of the Nazis, the immediate need arose to create a British volunteer fighting force, which would wage a different war against the Hitlerite armies. This force was named the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Its mission was to carry out acts of espionage and sabotage in the Nazi background. The fighters of this formation would derail trains, demolish bridges, and sabotage weapons factories. They would help organise guerrilla warfare in all enemy-occupied countries.

One of the most important acts undertaken by Great Britain towards Albania is the inclusion of our country in the map of actions of SOE.

According to Roderick Bailey, in 1943, a small elite team of British soldiers began parachuting into the mountains of occupied Albania. They were members of the SOE and had the task of finding and arming guerrilla fighters and attacking the enemy as much as they could. They had never stepped into Albania before and did not even know what awaited them there.

Trying to survive in the most extreme conditions and tough terrain, these young Britons lived in constant danger of falling into the hands of the enemy, where certain death awaited them.

When we talk about SOE, we remember the contribution given by those who operated on Albanian soil. Fifty-three members of these forces gave their lives in Albania. The odyssey of their bones is very tragic during the communist era. However, there came a time when, finally, on November 11, 2012, a memorial service was organised at the British Cemetery behind the University of Tirana. Since that day, the British Embassy in Tirana, together with its Albanian friends, does organise ceremonies in November every year in the same place.

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[13] UNRRA - United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

[14] "*An Englishman in Albania: Memoirs of a British Officer, 1929-1955*" I.B. Tauris; Revised edition (July 22, 2005).

[15] In 1943, small teams of British elite soldiers began parachuting into the mountains of occupied Albania. None of them had been to Albania before and did not know what awaited them. Roderick Bailey tells this story in his book "The Wildest Province."

One of the most spectacular actions of the SOE was the evacuation of 12 American nurses along with 18 members of the crew of the American C-53 aircraft, which crashed by plane in a village near Berat on November 8, 1943. [16]The Americans travelled 800 miles from Berat to Skrapar, Korça, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Tragjas and Dukat. All this was done under the protection and care of generous Albanians in those areas. Finally, British SOE officers escorted them by a British submarine from Karaburun to the liberated zones of Italy.

After returning home, SOE veterans who operated in Albania served their country in various forms. Many of them became prominent politicians, such as Harold Julian Amery - Baron Amery of Lustleigh (1919–1996) - British conservative politician, who was part of the group dubbed the "Three Musketeers," along with Major Davis Smiley and Colonel Neil McLean.

A Such was John Anthony Quayle, the great English theatre actor who starred in films with Lawrence Oliver, who directed the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, where he laid the foundations for the creation of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company. He was a permanent active member of the Anglo-Albanian Association until he died in 1989. Another prominent figure was Colonel David Smiley, who wrote the book "Albanian Assignment."[17]

Likewise, Colonel Neil "Billy" McLean, in 1944, formed a small team called the "Three Musketeers." One of the most influential figures of this unit was Margaret Hasluck, a woman who dedicated her life to Albania. Albania owes its gratitude and honour to both the fallen and the survivors for their contribution to the liberation of our country from Nazi-Fascism.

## 2.9 WWII, the Cold War, and severance of Diplomatic Relations with the United Kingdom

With the departure of the UNRRA Mission in 1946, everything cooled down, and relations were severed. Some elements that made the relationship exceedingly difficult, even impossible, contributed to this breakup. The anti-Anglo-American political course of the Albanian dictator was reinforced by the 'Gold' issue and the Corfu Incident, which are discussed below.

On the other hand, the anti-communist resistance of nationalists and anti-communists was severely damaged by the treason of the British agent Kim Philby. As it is explained by Lord Nicholas Bethel in his book "The great betrayal"[18], the efforts of the UK and the US to bring regime change in Albania, through an intervention from abroad, were compromised due to his activity. Consequently, the resistance movement, was put under full control of the communist dictator of Albania, costing the lives of hundreds anti-communist Albanian patriots.

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[16] "Albanian Escape", Agnes Jensen Mangerich, Evelyn M. Monahan, Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee, Published April 14th, 2006 by University Press of Kentucky.

[17] "Albanian Assignment": The Memoir of an SOE Agent in World War Two (The Extraordinary Life of Colonel David Smiley.

[18] "*The great betrayal, The untold story of Kim Philby's*" by Nicholas Bethel.

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## 2.10 The Corfu Incidents

Two intertwined issues have acted as major obstacles to the diplomatic relations between Albania and the United Kingdom for half a century, from the end of the Second World War to the Fall of the Berlin Wall. These are the Corfu Incident and the issue of the Albanian Gold.

The first incident in the Gulf of Corfu occurred on May 15, 1946, when British ships had entered Albanian territorial waters without permission and were faced with open fire, without warning, by the Albanian border military forces. The incident passed without substantial damages. After this case, the British demanded the Albanians to apologise, which they did not accept.

On October 22, 1946, a British flotilla entered the Corfu Channel again, without the permission of the Albanian government, but instructed that if Albanians opened fire, they would respond. What happened was tragic. The ships ran into mines, which caused severe damage, with 44 Britons dead, 42 injured, and two severely damaged destroyers, one irreparable. The third incident occurred on November 12-13, 1946, while the British claimed to be clearing mines in the Channel, without receiving permission from the Albanian authorities.

These events became the cause for legal treatment in the International Court of Justice in The Hague,[19] which finally condemned Albania and acquitted the United Kingdom. Albania has never pleaded guilty to these incidents. It was justified that it was in defence of its territorial integrity and that the mines were remnants left by the Germans. Indeed, after the expertise given to them in Malta, it turned out that the mines were produced in Germany.

## 2.11 The issue of the Albanian Gold[20]

The issue of the Albanian gold seized by the British government is quite complex. After the Second World War, the Allies seized 1,574 kilograms of Albanian gold that was looted by the Nazi Germans during the war. It was debated at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 and became a matter of negotiation between a tripartite Gold Commission, which included the United States, Great Britain, and France. It was decided in this conference that this gold would be put under the custody of Great Britain. The argument of the British government was that it would remain deposited in the Bank of England, as a guarantee, until Albania respected the decision given by the International Court of Justice regarding the Corfu

[19] Corfu Channel Case Judgment of 9 April 1949: I.C.J. Reports 1949.

[20] In Search of Gold, The History of Albanian Gold Abducted during the Second World War", Xenophon Kristafi, "Dita" 2000.

incidents. This issue would take decades of debate until both countries started negotiations in 1985.After seven years of negotiations, in 1992, an agreement was reached between two countries. However, Albania had to wait until 1998 for banking formalities to be completed.

## 2.12 Restoration of Diplomatic Relations between the two countries

After 44 years of complete isolation, the last "fortress" of communist dictatorships in Europe fell, and Albania took the course of liberal democracy, and free-market reforms. The two countries began talks and re-established diplomatic relations in 1991. Economic assistance and expertise followed the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Old English friends, those still living from Churchill's 'Secret Army,' SOE, turned their eyes to Albania emerging from the ruins of communism. Parliamentarians, lords, prominent politicians showed great interest in Albania. Among them stand out the Fourth Baron, Lord Nicholas William Bethell, Davis Smiley, [21] and Julio Emery.

Albania's Friends Group was established in 2017 and is one of the first groups of friendship established in the British Parliament. It includes Lord Debbie, Lord Alan Watson, Lord Michael Bates, Lord Robert MacLeenen, Lord Robertson, former NATO Secretary-General, the Liberal Democrat leader, Petty Ashdown, as well as MPs like John Grogan and Mark Prichard.

## 2.13 BBC Radio in the Albanian language

BBC Radio (British Broadcast Corporation) is the British radio that dates to 1920 and is the most prestigious in the world, with the largest audience globally. In 1940, Albanians had the opportunity to listen to its programs in their language. The British sought to mobilise peoples against fascism and Nazism, using radio as a communication tool. This program continued for decades, until 1967, in the hope that it would inform Albanians and motivate them to fight their communist dictatorship. BBC resumed its broadcast in Albanian again after the regime change, in the early 1990s, and continued until 28 February 2011, when the BBC World Service was cut worldwide, due to financial crisis and austerity measures.

[21] Smiley was the author of three books based on his experiences, *Albanian Assignment*.

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# 3. ALBANIA "IN THE EYES" OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD, PRESENTED BY BRITISH INTELLECTUALS

## 3.1 Early depictions of Albania in British books and paintings

Since in the 16th century intellectuals, writers, poets, painters, architects, and future prominent British politicians have visited Albanian lands. Travel notes, books they have written, images they have painted, legacy memories, travel diaries and impressions, sketches of Albania's sights have played a large part in the positive perception of the people of the United Kingdom for the Albanian people.

Although a distant and exotic country to the British people, historical records show that Albania is mentioned since the 16th century, if not earlier. From a meeting between the Kings of France and England in 1510 in Calès, France, the two kings appeared dressed in Albanian national costumes, which were very much liked. [22] Later, the name Illyria was mentioned by William Shakespeare in his work "The Twelfth Night," in 1602.[23]

Another other English author, who in 1603 mentions Albania in his pervasive work: *"The General History of the Turks from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Ottoman family*," is Richard Knolles.[24] It gives two of the most exciting stories of the Middle Ages, dealing with Albanians: one is the History of the Kosovo War of 1389, which he describes as "a battle where a coalition of Hungarians, Croats, Albanians, Bosnians, and Serbs fought against the Ottoman Turks." He also refers to the 1443–1468 period prescribing Skanderbeg's stories.[25]

In 1717, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689 - 1762), Lady of the British Ambassador to Istanbul, Edward Wortley Montagu, wrote about the Albanians on April 1, 1717[26]. After her comes William Martin Leake[27] (1777 - 1860), a diplomat who wrote a four-volume book called "Travels in Northern Greece," published in London in 1835.

Similarly, Sir Henry Holland (1788–1873), a medical doctor who graduated in Edinburgh, who is compared in his ability with Louis Pasteur, visited Albania in 1811. In his book "*Travels in the Ionian Islands, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia,* etc."[28] during the years 1812-1813, he gives a realistic view of those areas for the time.

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[22] Calendar, State Papers, and Manuscripts relating to English Affairs. Existing in the Archives and Collections of VENICE and in other libraries of Northern Italy, Vol III, 1510 – 1526, page 52.

[23] "Twelfth Night, or What You Will" is Shakespeare's comedy that takes place on the Illyrian coast.

[24] Richard Knolles," The General History of the Turks from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Ottoman family published in Oxford in 1610.

[25] Scanderbeg prince of the Epirots, vnto Vladislaus king of Hungary and Polonia. page 745.

[26] The letters and works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, vol.1 (London G. Bohn, 1861) pp. 290-291.

[27] Leake, William Martin, (1777-1860 ). *Travels in Northern Greece*, published in London, J. Rodwell.

[28] Henry Holland, *"Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia"*, Longman, Hurst, 1812, 1813. Published in Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815.

Then comes Lord George Gordon Byron (1788 - 1824), who is best known for his poem Pilgrimage of Child Harold", which he wrote when he visited Albania in 1808 - 1809. He appeared in Albanian national costume, praising it very highly. In this work he writes:

> Land of Albania! where Iskander rose.
> Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
> And he his namesake, whose oft-baffled foes,
> Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise:
> Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
> On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
> The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
> And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
> Through many a cypress grove within each city's ken.

John Cameron Hobhouse (1786-1869), known as Lord Broughton, traveled to Albania along Lord Byron. In his 1150-page book, entitled "*A trip through Albania and other Turkish provinces in Europe and Asia to Constantinople,*"[29] between 1809 and 1810, he devoted more than half of the book to Albania.

Another visitor of Albanian lands in the mid-nineteenth century is the English artist (poet, musician and painter) Edward Lear (1812-1888), who has immortalised his impression of Albania through his paintings.

Similarly, Thomas Smart Hughes (1786 - 1847) brings us a picture of "Northern" Albania, as he calls the northern part of the Albanian lands, nowadays under Greece.[30] Charles Robert Cockerel (1788–1863) was the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

## 3.2 British visitors to Albanian lands throughout history

The President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and one of the Georgian-style architects of London devoted seven years to traveling, between 1810-1817, in various countries, including Albania. Records of his travels, published in 1903.[31]

In 1830, Benjamin Disraeli (1804 - 1881), twice Prime Minister of Great Britain, went through a journey from Malta to Albania, which lasted 17 months. During that time, he writes to his father:

> Dear father!

[29] *John Hobhouse - A Journey through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople during the Years 1809 and 1810, London 1813.*

[30] Thomas Smart Hughes – "*Travels in Greece and Albania*", page100 London, Henry Colburn, and Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1830.

[31] Charles Robert Cockerel, "Albanian Pallkars Art Funded", 1922.

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I mentioned in my letter that there is a possibility I can pay a visit to the Grand Vizier in Ioannina, in the capital of Albania.

After returning from Albania, in 1833, Disraeli wrote a book entitled "The rise of Iskander."[32], with literary motifs taken from the life and work of the Albanian National Hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu, published in 1833 in England and in 2018, in the Albanian language in Kosovo.

In 1831, David Urquhart (1805–1877), a Scottish politician who had also served as secretary of the British Embassy in Istanbul and later, from 1847 to 1952, a member of the British Parliament, visited Albania. He has written the book titled "*Spirit of the East*,"[33] where he describes the former greatness of the ancient city of Durres.

In 1834, Robert Curzon (1810–1873) came to Albania. He publishes the book "Visits to Monasteries in the Levant."[34] It is the year 1850 when Captain Edmund Spencer writes the book "Journey to European Turkey, through Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thrace, Albania and Epirus with a visit to Greece and the Ionian Islands."[35] Three years later, in 1853, Dr. Willian Wingfield (1813-1874) traveled along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, reflecting his impressions on it in his book "A Tour of Dalmatia, Albania and Montenegro with a Historical Outline of the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) from Early Times until its final fall," published in 1859, in London.[36]

In 1861, George Finlay (1799-1875), in his book "*History of the Greek Revolution" (Edinburgh & London 1861)*[37], gives us a detailed picture of the Albanian presence in Central Greece in the mid-nineteenth century. Four years later, in 1865, Henry Fanshawe Tozer (1829-1916) visited Albanian lands. He traveled throughout Greece and the Ottoman Empire. Tozer starts the journey from Struga,[38] just like Finley, precisely at the water source of the River Black Drin. In 1865, Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh (1831 - 1889) also visited Albania. He is the most interesting, the most amazing, the most impressive traveler in the world. He was born without legs and arms but became a successful politician.[39] Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941) was a British archaeologist known for discovering in 1900–1903 the ruins of the Palace of Knossos on the island of Crete. His works on the Balkans have been published in 2008 in London, in the

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[32] Benjamin Disraeli -The Rise of Iskander" ("Naltësimi i Iskanderit") published in Albanian by KOHA, in Prishtina, 2018.

[33] David Urquhart – "*The spirit of the East, Journal of Travelers through Roumeli during an eventful period*", author of Turkey and its Resources – England, France, Russia, and Turkey. Volume I, Henry Colburn Publisher, Great Marlborough Street, 1838.

[34] Robert Curzon: "*Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*", London 1849, reprinted as *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*. Introduction by John Julius Norwich. London: Century 1983, p. 254-271.

[35] Edmund Spencer: "*Travels in European Turkey in 1850, through Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thrace, Albania, and Epirus, with a visit to Greece and the Ionian Isles, and a homeward tour through Hungary and the Slavonian Provinces of Austria on the Lower Danube*". Volume 2 (London: Colburn and Co., 1851), pp. 80-176.

[36] A Tour in Dalmatia, Albania, and Montenegro with a Historical Sketch of the Republic of Ragusa, from the Earliest Times Down to Its Final Fall Paperback– April 1, 2007.

[37] *History of Greek Revolution, Edinburg & London, 1861.*

[38] Henry Fanshawe Tozer, *Research in the Highlands of Turkey, Including Visits to Mounts Ida, Athos, Olympus, and Pelion, to the Mirdite Albanians, and Other Remote Tribes*, London: John Murray 1869, Volume 1, Chapter IX, pp. 195-217.

[39] Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh, *London, 1891, 8vo; The Lancet, 14 March 1891; Blackwood, cxlix. 429 et seq.; Dublin Gazette, 1866.*

volumes "Ancient Illyria: An Archeological Exploration," and "Albanian Letters: Nationalism, Independence, and the Albanian League," I.B Tauris.

After him, in 1878, Edward Frederick Knight (1852 - 1925) visited Albania, who wrote the book "*Albania - A Tale of the Last Journey*."[40] In 1878, Fanny Janet Blunt (1839-1926) passed through Albania, which is remembered for two volumes of "People of Turkey,"[41] published in London in 1878. At the same time, Henry Noel Brailsford (1873-1958) published the book "Macedonia: Races, and it's future," [42]London 1906. Sir Robert Graves (1858-1934) wrote the book "*The Near East Storm Centers*"[43], published in London in 1933.

In 1912, Graves walked all over Kosovo, Prizren, Gjakova, and other cities and gave us a fascinating view of them. Shortly afterward, in 1912, Wadham Peacock appeared and published in 1914, in London, the book *"Albania - Abandoned State of Europe."*[44] Duncan Heaton-Armstrong (1886 - 1969), an Irish captain who served as the private secretary to King Wilhelm Widi, in 1914, in Albania, published the book "6 Months Kingdom".[45]

In 1915, Norman Douglas (1868-1952) wrote: "Old Calabria's"[46] book. He is supposed to be the first British traveler to read and write about the Arbëresh areas of southern Italy and stops at the true founder of the Albanian National Renaissance, Jeronim De Rada. After him, we see Colonel George Fraser Phillips (1863 - 1921), a British military figure who in 1913 settled in Shkodra, thus becoming the virtual governor of Shkodra, until the forces withdrew in 1914. Harry Hodgkinson (1913-1994), a British journalist and well-known writer, visited Albania in 1937. This Englishman left as a last will to bury him in a coffin covered with the Albanian flag.[47]

### 3.3 British women visiting Albania throughout history

Among the most famous Englishwomen who contributed the most to Albania and Albanians is Edith Durham (1863 - 1944), who was also known as the "Queen of the Mountains," She was a British writer and traveler from a large and prosperous North London family. Durham has worked for various humanitarian organisations, painting, writing, and has collected numerous souvenirs from folk art and folklore.

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[40] "*Albania A Narrative of Recent Travel*", by E.F Knight, barrister at law, with illustrations. London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, Crown Building, 188 Fleet Street, 1880.

[41] Fanny Janet Blunt: "*The People of Turkey, Twenty Years Residence among Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Turks and Armenians", by a Consul's Daughter and Wife.* Edited by Stanley Lane Poole (London: John Murray, 1878), vol. 1, p. 62-87.

[42] H. N. Brailsford, "*Macedonia: its Races and their Future*" (London: Methuen & Co. 1906, p. 262-280.

[43] Storm Centers of the Near East Hardcover – June 1, 1976.

[44] *The Wild Albanian" - The Fortnightly Review*, London, May 1913. Reprinted by the Centre for Albanian Studies, London, 2000.

[45] Duncan Heaton – Armstrong: "Gervase Belfield": The Six Month Kingdom: Albania 1914 Hardcover – September 17, 2005 Bejtullah D Destani: Centre for Albanian Studies (London England) New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

[46] Norman Douglas: "*Old Calabria*" First published in 1915, is a comprehensive and exciting account of adventure travel.

[47] Testimony of the historian Bejtullah Destani, a participant in Harry Hodgkinson's funeral procession.



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Her work has a real significance in the field of anthropology. Durham wrote seven books on the Balkan issues, of which "High Albania" (1909) is the best known. Her contribution to recognising British foreign policy towards Albania at that time is incomparable. Making known the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth with the Albanian issue constitutes a bright page of her activity and the history of our relations. Another lady contributing to Albanians is Margaret Masson Hasluck, known as Peggy Hasluck. Since 1923, she spent most of her years in Albania, living in the city of Elbasan for 13 years. Her life is written in a special edition, known as "A Woman in Albania, The Life of Margaret Hasluck."[48]

One of the brightest figures of the English aristocracy and the British nation, an incomparable friend of the Albanian people, is Elizabeth Herbert, Countess Carnarvon (1856 - 1929), the mother of Colonel Aubrey Herbert. She was focused on the fight against malaria. In the winter of 1926, she visited Albania and established an anti-malaria health mission, opened a school in the village of Qerret (Herbert), which still exists today, opened the first Public Library in Tirana named Herbert, and helped Albanian refugees from Kosovo at that time. The English lady, Ruth Pennington - Warner, in the years 1925 – 1926, joined Mrs. Elizabeth Herbert. She organised a course for the preparation of nurses for the Vlora hospital. She would provide quinine, which she prepared in a small apartment given to her by the Lui Paster Institute in Durrës. There she remained until the time of the fascist occupation, in the spring of 1939.

## 3.4 British visitors to Albania after the 'great isolation' period of 1944 – 1990

The severance of relations with the United Kingdom in 1939 and the attitude of dictator Enver Hoxha towards the British immediately after the Second World War, caused a long separation of contact between the two peoples and our countries. After restoring diplomatic relations in 1991, many authors were reactivated and wrote books about Albanians.

Sir Noel Malcolm is the preeminent author, English journalist, historian, academic, philosopher, and political analyst. He has worked as a political and foreign relations journalist for several British newspapers, and he has written extensively on the history of Albanians in the Balkans[49].

[48] *"Our Woman in Albania: The Life of Margaret Hasluck, Scholar, and Spy"*. Bejtullah D. Destani.
[49] Published in March 1833.

Other British authors who write about Albanians are Michael Gun,[50] Owen Pearson[51], Jason Tomes,[52] John Hodgson[53], the collector of Skanderbeg's works, Patricia Nugee[54], Robert Wilton, and many others, including the composer, Roxanna Panufnik.

[50] Michael Gun, "*A Historical Dictionary of the Albanian Tribes, Clans & Families*", Highland Heritage Press, 2021.

[51] "*Albania in the Twentieth Century, A History*", in three volumes, published by I.B Tauris.

[52] *Jason Tomes "King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania" Paperback – August 24, 2000*

[53] John Hodgson is a translator of six books by Ismail Kadare, directly from Albanian to English.

[54] Patricia Nugee has spent a good part of her life collecting books on Skanderbeg's life and adventures. Her collection of those books was exhibited in different places such as Tirana, Barcelona, Prishtina, London, etc.



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## 4. ALBANIANS PRESENCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

While official statistics are often disputed, the Albanian embassy in the UK claims that there are around 150'000 Albanians living in the in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.[55] They can be divided into several groups.

### 4.1 Immigrants between 1944 and 1990

The emigration of Albanians to the United Kingdom until the period of the fall of the communist regime in Albania consisted of a very small number of citizens. They were mostly individuals who went there before, during, or even after World War II. One of them was Gjençe Nashi, a member of the entourage of King Zog in exile, a former diplomat of the Kingdom of Albania in Paris and Ankara. After King Zog left England, he stayed in London. [56] His son, Alexander, established the Nash Fellowship, which aims to promote research on Albania through the UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES).[57]

Other prominent Albanians were Qazim Kastrati, Ihsan Toptani, and Dervish Duma. Viktor Çami, as a speaker of BBC radio in Albanian, became very well known in the Albanian circles of the time. Among them was Anton Logoreci,[58] who in 1937, had studied at the London School of Economics. He also worked in the Albanian section of the BBC. His son, Filipi, is active in the Anglo-Albanian Association. These individuals were considered 'Enemies of the People' in Albania and never had the opportunity to visit their country until after 1991.

### 4.2 Emigration after 1991

After the fall of Communism Great Britain opened its doors to Albanians, especially young people, who upon graduation in the UK return back home, contributing to the economic, political and social life of Albania.

A considerable part of the Albanians of Albania presented themselves in the English immigration offices as Kosovo Albanians. Prime Minister Tony Blair's benevolent policy towards Kosovo allowed Albanians to seek refuge without much difficulty and strict control over their state affiliation. This led to the fact that after everything was clarified, the Albanians from Albania, who had presented themselves as Kosovars, faced serious problems due to identity, which they had to clarify whenever it was needed, such as marriage or other matters of civil

[55] The Albanian ambassador to the UK, Qirjako Qirko quoted by the Guardian on October 3, 2021

[56] See the book "Me Mbretin Zog ne Mergim", published by the publishing house ARTINI, in 2019.

[57] Gjençe Nagi was the private secretary of the former Albanian king Zog. His son Alexander Nash fulfilled his father's wish (who had died in 1992) to establish a Center for Albanian Studies in London at UCL.

[58] Anton Logoreci, "*Europe's Forgotten Survivors*", London 1977.

nature. Moreover, Albanians of all ethnic territories did find the United Kingdom a place of great opportunities for employment, education, academic studies, business, art, culture, media, etc. Many of them have even made a good fortune. It is difficult to mention all of them. Therefore, let's mention those who have become very well-known as Albanian-British citizens.

### 4.3 Prominent Albanians currently living in the UK

Today there are some prominent names, among which stand out: world-famous singers, Rita Ora and Dua Lipa, professor at the London School of Economics, philosopher Lea Ypi, professors Arjan Gjonca and Gëzim Alpion, lecturer at the Metropolitan University of Cardiff, Dr. Vera Ndreca.

Composer Thomas Simaku is an Assistant Professor of Composition at York University in England. Tomorr Kokona, a well-known choreographer, with his wife, pianist Mariela Cingu, make their debut in many activities in London. Famous violinist Alda Dizdari, and Glasgow Opera soprano Miranda Sinani are already very well known. Moreover, the Royal Opera House in London hosts two world-famous Albanian artists every year: Soprano Ermonela Jaho and tenor Saimir Pirgu. Likewise, Armando Broja is the Southampton striker in the Premier League, born in Slough England to an immigrant family from Albania. Also, a lawyer named Kastriot Berberi is the first Albanian-British elected to the London Borough of Waltham Forest council.

### 4.4 The Albanian community in the UK

Many Albanian associations operate in London, two of them are named "Shpresa" (The Hope) and "Ardhmeria" (The Future). Furthermore, Albanians also have their own newspapers, such as "The Albanian" and "Fjala e Lirë," as well as their own television, AlbUK Television.

Albanians in London are proud of the symbols that remind them of their country's identity from where they emigrated. First is the Bust of Skanderbeg, carved by Kreshnik Xhiku, located at 113 Inverness Terrace, London W2 6JH, under the epitaph: Invincible Albanian National Hero, Defender of Western Civilization.

The portrait of the poet George Gordon Byron in Albanian national costume is considered the most beautiful portrait of the National Portrait Gallery in Great Britain. It is the work of the painter Thomas Philips (1770–1845)[59].

The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, London, preserves the entire photographic collection, gifted by Ms. Edith Durham.[60] At the same time, in the Tate Britain art museum, there

[59] Portrait of Lord Byron at the age of 25, dressed in a traditional Albanian costume.

[60] My Balkan notebook: drawings, photographs, and notes, made between 1900-1914, Mary Edith Durham, London, 1940.

is a portrait of Mehmet Ali Pasha Kavalla,[61] the founder of modern Egypt and one of the world's most extraordinary personalities of Albanian descent.

[61] Tate Britain Museum portrait of Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt.



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## 8. CONCLUSIONS

- For centuries, British travellers, historians, writers, poets, and artists have been drawn to Albanians, and many of them have praised Albanian culture and history in their work. Benjamin Disraeli has dedicated a book to the Albanian National Hero, Skanderbeg, with the aim of presenting to his compatriots the highest moral model he found in the figure of Iskander.
- Throughout history British politicians, authors, artists and other prominent figures have played a positive and decisive role in encouraging the independence of Albania, as well as protecting the integrity and continuity of the Albanian state, by:
    - spearheading a campaign for the country's admission to the League of Nations.
    - helping Albania improve its international position by joining international organisations such as NATO and the OSCE
    - helping maintain public order and tranquillity during the reign of King Zog.
    - helping organise the Albanian resistance against Nazism army during the Second World War. The British army stepped into Albania as liberators and left 53 martyrs behind.
    - helping the attempts for a regime change during the Cold War, when Albania was ruled by a communist dictatorship
    - assisting in democratic developments and institutional building after the regime change in the early 1990s.
- The United Kingdom sheltered tens of thousands of Albanians who prosper today. A notable phenomenon is that thousands of Albanians who had obtained EU citizenship crossed the sea and found better shelter and living opportunities in the UK.
- Tens of thousands of Albanians living in the United Kingdom are the "bridging bridge" between the two countries.
- British intellectuals, as they have done throughout history, continue to play a positive role, by using their soft power tools to help Albania progress towards a better future.
- The intensification of economic relations, utilising the sizeable Albanian-British population's activities, is already a sine qua non. Further, the development would be to the benefit of both countries.
- The Albanian economy would benefit significantly from the even more significant involvement of the British in the sectors mentioned in this paper. Albania still retains its exotic and attractive nature to the British, which is a reasonable basis for developing the tourism sector.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policymakers can do more to facilitate financial exchange between both countries. The strategic geographical position of Albania might present new opportunities for British industry to transfer production capacities and diversify its supply chain, reducing transportation time, increasing resilience and lower their production costs.
- From the perspective of trade, the two countries have many opportunities to expand their cooperation and strategically harmonise diversifications into many sectors and industries from which both peoples can benefit.
- More should be done to encourage British Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). Taking into consideration that Albania has one of the youngest populations in Europe, composed of highly skilled workforce and well trained young people who speak English and look up to the Western Way of life.
- Albanian government should coordinate the work of other actors (both public and private) to make Albania more welcoming to British tourists. While it still lacks the capacity to build a large-scale infrastructure, required for massive tourism, Albania's coastline and mountains can offer a lot to British travellers throughout the year. Similarly, its culinary traditions offer cultural richness to tourists.
- The long history of British travellers in Albania should be celebrated and promoted even further in both countries.
- Both governments should work with the private sector to encourage airlines to increase the frequency of flights, and to introduce low-cost flights between two countries. In that vein, a lot of work has to be done to facilitate the visa application process.



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